

The Honorable Gregory Meeks
Chair, Committee on Foreign Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Michael McCaul
Ranking Member, Committee on Foreign Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

May 11, 2022

Dear Chairman Meeks, Ranking Member McCaul, and Members of the Foreign Affairs Committee,

The undersigned groups wish to thank you for holding the hearing “Forest Conservation in the Fight Against Climate Change.” U.S. efforts to conserve global forests and address deforestation, forest degradation, and the conversion of natural habitats are essential to advancing U.S. economic, security, and environmental interests. Forests and other important biomes—such as the tropical rain forests of the Amazon, Congo Basin, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, and Central America and the Cerrado savanna and Pantanal wetlands of Brazil—are critical for human well-being and livelihoods, biodiversity, and carbon sequestration. A comprehensive U.S. approach backed by programs, policies, funding, and diplomatic engagement is needed to ensure the long-term conservation of these ecosystems. This includes specific initiatives to eliminate commodity-driven deforestation, forest degradation, and habitat conversion; halt bad actors from engaging in illegal timber extraction and illegal deforestation; promote sustainable livelihoods and the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities; and protect and restore forests and other natural landscapes.

Two pieces of proposed legislation would strengthen the role the U.S. government can play by establishing policy and enforcement mechanisms to curb global deforestation, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and increase U.S. competitiveness to advance sustainable and legal forest management globally:

- **The AMAZON21 Act** (America Mitigating and Achieving Zero-emissions Originating from Nature for the 21st Century Act) would authorize a new U.S. trust fund to finance projects in strategic U.S. partner countries that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including forest conservation and reforestation efforts.
- **The FOREST Act** (Fostering Overseas Rule of Law and Environmentally Sound Trade Act) would establish a new mechanism to remove illegal deforestation from agricultural commodity supply chains by creating a risk-based due diligence and reporting framework for key imported products; establishing incentives for U.S. businesses and partner countries to reduce deforestation; and updating financial crime statutes to apply to criminal enterprises engaged in illegal deforestation.

We appreciate your leadership in examining ways for the U.S. government to scale up efforts to address climate change and advance a zero-deforestation policy agenda. Backed by significant new investment, these policies would be an ambitious and important down payment to ensure the future of forests and the role they play in achieving U.S. foreign policy goals. We look forward to working with you and your staff to advance policies and investments that will help reduce global deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions.

Sincerely,

Climate Advisers • Conservation International • Environmental Investigation Agency • Fairtrade America • Foreign Policy for America • Forest Trends • Global Witness • Mighty Earth • National Audubon Society • National Wildlife Federation • Oceanic Preservation Society • Slow Food USA • The Nature Conservancy • Wildlife Conservation Society • World Wildlife Fund